

# Mayor's Message: March 2009



**Mayor Russ Wall**

The tragic deaths of two young men in Kearns/West Valley last month have raised concerns about gang activity and violence in our community. A town meeting was held at Kearns High School to discuss the situation. Sheriff Jim Winder made some comments that I think should be shared with every parent of children. He stated that he hoped parents are not looking to law enforcement officials or the government to solve the issues we are having with young people. These problems need to be dealt with as families and community members, not government.

Unless and until parents understand this reality, the problem will continue to grow.

Teachers in our area are dedicated professionals who have worked hard and have studied to provide an education for kids. And while we appreciate all of the good things our teachers do in teaching good manners and behavior, they are not and should not be responsible for teaching children to be good citizens. That role is reserved for parents and no one else can do it better than Mom and Dad.

Some parents have asked what they should look for to see if their child is at risk of or is involved in gang or criminal activity. *You should worry if:*

1. You do not know your children's friends.
2. You do know your children's friends and you would not trust them alone in your home.
3. You do not know what your children do when you are not with them.
4. Your children are not at home after the 11:00 p.m. curfew.
5. Your children often wear gang colors or dress like gang members. (Children tend to dress according to that which they aspire to or respect.)
6. Your children have expensive items or large amounts of cash that their job could not support (especially if they do not have a job).
7. Your children steal from you.
8. Your children use profanity or other displays of disrespect towards you or others.
9. Your children lose interest in school or church activities.
10. Your children's school grades drop suddenly.
11. Your children look at you more as a friend than a parent.
12. You engage in illegal activities yourself in front of your children.
13. You provide alcohol or tobacco products to your children who are underage.
14. You think your children are "just going through a phase" when you are told of their criminal or anti-social activities.
15. You are just "too busy" to attend PTA, Back to School night, Parent-Teacher conferences or your children's play or sports activity. (I know that some parents work many hours and cannot always attend, but my hope is that you would be aware of these events and have discussions about them with your kids.)
16. Your children have drug paraphernalia, drugs or a gun.
17. You haven't looked through your children's room at least once a year for any of the above.
18. Your children have locks on their bedroom doors for which you do not have a key.
19. Your children spend excessive time on the computer.
20. You do not check out what programs or internet sites your children use.

I realize this is a long list and would take a long time for some parents to work on and change but I have heard that planning for and attending an unexpected funeral takes a lot of time also.

If you know, or even think that your child is involved in illegal or gang activity, please contact your child's school counselor or local law enforcement for help and/or advice.

There are many opportunities and programs that are available for kids to be involved with throughout the community (Jr. Jazz, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, YWCA, Little League sports, etc). Many local churches also offer activities for kids. Please contact your local school or call 2-1-1 for more information.

P.S. If your child has suddenly developed an interest in or collection of spray paint or felt tip markers, you can be assured that he/she is either huffing (sniffing) the contents to get high (which is extremely dangerous to health), or they are vandalizing other people's property or public property (which will very expensive for YOU if your child is caught – the City has started suing parents to pay restitution for damages caused by minors).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lino Wall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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